

According to the following media experts, including your own former chairman, Sinclair's plans are outrageous on so many different levels:

"Ordering stations to carry propaganda? It's absolutely off the charts," says former Federal Communications Commission chairman Reed Hundt, who served under President Clinton. "Any FCC chairman, from the left or the right, would agree with me. I'd be shocked if you could find any other broadcast conduct like this" in the history of American television.

Bob Zelnick, chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University, a self-described conservative who says he intends to vote for President Bush, calls Sinclair's decision "an unfortunate precedent" that runs counter to "good journalism" and "is not what network news ought to be about." A former Pentagon correspondent for ABC News, Zelnick says, "Whether you're liberal or conservative, if you have roots in the journalism profession, there are core values that transcend and need to survive election to election. You avoid airing, very close to election, highly charged, partisan material that takes the guise of a documentary."

"If I were a Sinclair news director I'd quit," says Dow Smith, professor of journalism at Syracuse University and a former NBC news director in Detroit. "I'm certainly not going to encourage any of my students to work for Sinclair."

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.